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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 001886

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SUBJECT: UK'S LIBERAL DEMOCRATS: LOOKING FOR INFLUENCE NOT  
POWER, FOR NOW

REF: LONDON 1771

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. Britain's third party, the Liberal Democrats, launched July 17 their "Make It Happen" campaign to communicate the party's c

¶2. (C/NF) Summary continued. At the same time, Liberal Democrat insiders report the party has been clarifying its thinking on foreign policy.

Clarifying Thinking on Foreign Policy and Security -----

¶3. (C) The party sees maintaining "credibility on defense and security issues" as crucial for the party's viability, especially because of the

¶4. (C) Acknowledging the Iraq war is no longer a salient issue the Lib Dems can use to rally support against the Labour government, Simpson sa

¶5. (C) Given the current UK economic crunch, the party does not think that foreign policy will feature prominently in the presumed 2010 electi

¶6. (C) Simpson said the tension that exists between the Lib Dems and U.S. foreign policy is somewhat intrinsic to the party's anti-establishme

Making It Happen on Domestic Issues -----

¶7. (C) In Clegg's July 3 speech to the Local Government Association, he outlined how the Lib Dem's want to decentralize power and taxation to

¶8. (C) Alexander said the Lib Dems are currently reviewing the national budget to find GBP 20 billion (USD 40 billion) in savings, "not throug

¶9. (C) Simpson said the party is also trying to define itself as the pro-family, pro-community party through decentralization, which resonates

¶10. (U) In addition to tax cuts, improved government service delivery, and decentralization, Clegg's July 17 "Make It Happen" campaign also hi

But Why a Third Party? -----

¶11. (C) Alexander acknowledged the Lib Dems have trouble distinguishing themselves from Labour and the Tories. This has been especially probl

Comment -----

¶12. (C/NF) Holding only 63 of Parliament's 646 seats leaves the Liberal Democrats struggling for an influential voice in Westminster on both c